

(Mr. HENSARLING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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2,000 U.S. SOLDIERS DEAD IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, yesterday we reached a tragic milestone. Staff Sergeant George T. Alexander, Jr., of Texas, died from wounds he sustained while serving in Iraq. His death brought the U.S. death toll in Iraq to 2,000 soldiers. In addition to that, over 15,000 soldiers have been wounded, and over 400 are now amputees. My thoughts and prayers are with Staff Sergeant Alexander's family, and with all the families that have lost a loved one in Iraq.

However, I hope the administration will use this milestone as an opportunity to be honest, to square with the American people about why we are fighting in Iraq, and to develop a stronger plan that will secure Iraq and conclude our involvement the war.

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that to govern is to make choices. When it comes to the Iraq War, President Bush has made the wrong choices. Instead of putting the entire resources of the United States behind the efforts to find those responsible for the September 11th terrorist attacks, the President chose to use those tragic events as an excuse to go to war in Iraq.

Where is Osama bin Laden? Have we stopped looking for him? We have invaded Iraq. We have the shock and awe campaign. Thousands of Iraqis are dead, and now 2,000 of our soldiers are dead. We have left Iraq, and Baghdad in particular, in shambles. We have appropriated money for the reconstruction of Iraq, and we told the American people that we would basically pay for the major reconstruction with the proceeds from the oil that we would pump in Iraq. None of this is true; no weapons of mass destruction, no money coming from the oil fields in Iraq, no rehabilitation having been done. The insurgents not only are bombing all of the different sites in Iraq, they are killing schoolteachers.

We have created a breeding ground for terrorists. Oh, we claim they are coming from Syria. We claim that Iran has a hand in it. What is interesting now is Condoleezza Rice is telling us that we are going to get Iran to help us with Iraq. At the same time, Iran is developing and making more sophisticated its nuclear ability, but now we are going to try and join in with them

to help us with Iraq? With this business of trying to make the American people believe that all of the insurgents are coming from Syria, we have created a new bogeyman for the people to focus on.

But that is not all about this terrorism, in this fight against terrorism. It seems to me that the President of the United States finds occasions by which he comes to the American public and he tells us that we have to be worried about a new terrorist threat. Every now and then he reminds us that the terrorists are still out there, and somehow we have to stay in Iraq. If we do not, we are going to be vulnerable to all of these terrorists. But if we stay the course, not only is he going to help keep us safe, no matter how many sacrifices we have to make, the right thing to do is to stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, that is easy to talk about and say when you are talking about somebody else's children. The President chose to go to war based on false and misleading intelligence. Look where it has gotten us. Look at the scandals surrounding the White House today because we tried to make the intelligence fit the decision that had already been made to go to war.

We are finding, and I guess we will know soon, once the indictments come down, who leaked the information about Valerie Plame and outed her because they were so mad at her husband, who had been sent to Niger to help put the story together that somehow Saddam Hussein had been seeking yellowcake in Niger. When Mr. Wilson came back and said it was not true, then they went after Mr. Wilson. Somehow the Vice President's office knows all about this.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to bring our soldiers home. It is time for Republicans and Democrats alike to understand that we do not need to lose another American soldier in Iraq.

He chose to go to war without international support or heed the warnings of those in Congress that urged him to slow the march to war.

The President chose to send our soldiers to war without the body armor and armored vehicles necessary to keep our soldiers safe.

And, he chose to go to war without an adequate number of troops or a clear plan for how to succeed in Iraq.

For those decisions, American soldiers are paying the price—and for 2,000 soldiers they have paid the ultimate price.

It is time that the President recognizes the dangers of "staying the course" and develops a plan that accomplishes our mission in Iraq and allows all our soldiers to return to their families.

Madam Speaker, over the past several weeks, members of the Republican Caucus have been trying to cut the Federal budget by \$50 billion. They claim that it is to help pay for the rebuilding efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and Rita.

Perhaps most shocking, the Republicans are trying to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

If the Republicans are successful in their efforts to cut discretionary funding by 2 percent,

the VA's budget will be cut by more than \$600 million which translates to nearly 100,000 fewer veterans receiving health care this year.

It is heartless and cruel to cut the VA's budget in order to make room for more tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans, while 159,000 U.S. soldiers are fighting in Iraq and tens of thousands more are deployed throughout the world.

I urge my colleagues to oppose these cuts and urge the American people to call their representatives and tell them to oppose these cuts.

Our soldiers and their families have sacrificed too much for us to turn our backs on them when they return home.

Madam Speaker, I close by thanking our soldiers for their service and pray for their safe return.

WAR ON TERROR—PROGRESS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I take the floor tonight with my colleagues to talk about the values of freedom and the men and women who have, in very difficult places around the world, but especially in the warfighting theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq, have fought to change the world for freedom and, in doing so, to secure the United States of America, and to make us a more secure Nation, and to accrue to the benefit of generations over the next 10, 20 or 30 years.

I thought to talk a little bit about, especially following the speakers who have deplored our policy and condemned our policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, I thought it might be important to remind ourselves why we are in those theaters.

Madam Speaker, I brought tonight some of the citations for gallantry, gallantry that was carried out by American soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines in Iraq. I wanted to read one of those. Then I wanted to talk about what these soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines have purchased for the United States of America. I want to talk about the value of what they have done for our country.

This individual is Lance Corporal Aaron C. Austin. This is a commendation, a copy of a commendation, and a posthumous Silver Star medal, the Nation's third highest award for valor that was sent over to our office by the Secretary of the Navy. It talks about the incredible job that this young lance corporal, one of the guys who makes the Marine Corps work, that is an enlisted man just a couple of ranks up from private, but somebody who has taken a leadership position, who leads a fire team or a squad in places like Fallujah or Ramadi.

For conspicuous gallantry and bravery in action against the enemy as a Machine Gun Team Leader, Company

E, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, Regimental Combat Team-1, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force. That is a force that takes a very dangerous difficult area west of Baghdad.

This great lance corporal, in an incredible firefight in which they were attacked from many different directions, by dozens of rocket-propelled grenades, RPGs, attacked by thousands of machine gun rounds, and then assaulted to within 20 meters of their position, Lance Corporal Austin supported his fellow marines, 16 of whom were wounded in this firefight, ensured that they receive medical treatment, and then rallied the few remaining members of his platoon and rushed to the critical rooftop defensive position to withstand the attack. I am quoting, "Braving withering enemy machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade fire, he reached the rooftop and prepared to throw a hand grenade. As he moved into a position from which to launch or throw this grenade, enemy machine gunfire struck Lance Corporal Austin multiple times in the chest. Undaunted by his injuries, and with heroic effort, Lance Corporal Austin threw his grenade which exploded amidst the enemy, halting their furious attack."

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He did that with the last efforts of his body before he succumbed to that mortal wound.

By his bold leadership, wise judgment and complete dedication to duty, Lance Corporal Austin reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest tradition of the Marine Corps and the United States naval service. That is what Gordon England, Secretary of the Navy, said in this posthumous award of the Silver Star medal to this lance corporal, one of thousands of about 140,000 personnel who have been in the theater consistently over the last several years, accomplishing their mission in Iraq.

So we know that this lance corporal had incredible bravery, and I think following especially the speakers who have criticized this mission and said it is without value, I think it is important to talk about the value for this Nation that this lance corporal and the other hundreds of thousands of men and women who wear the uniform of the United States have delivered to us through their service to our country.

To hear the speakers who have criticized this mission talk, we somehow have created a terrorist enemy and an insurgent enemy that, because of our own fault, attacks America, and the way for us to hold off these attacks, to dampen these attacks, is to be suppliant and to do nothing and to be complacent, and somehow we have agitated and upset the enemy who otherwise would not be intending to hurt Americans.

I am reminded that when those planes hit the United States in 9/11, it was following two major military operations that this country undertook. Interestingly, we took them both on be-

half of Muslim nations, protecting them from neighboring nations, from the attacks of neighboring nations.

One good question to ask the speakers who just finished was what did the United States do to deserve those attacks?

They further said, well, we did not find any nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, in Iraq, and, Madam Speaker, let me tell you what we did find and what the world found and what history will reflect to the end of time.

I keep in my desk drawer a picture of Iraqi Kurdish mothers holding their babies tightly against them as they lie dead where they fell on the hillsides in northern Iraq where Saddam Hussein killed them with weapons of mass destruction; that is, chemical weapons; that is, poison gas; the only leader, to my knowledge, since Adolf Hitler to kill his own people with poison gas.

Every time I hear a speech about how things would have been better if the Americans did not show up, I pull that picture out to remind myself that things only get better when the Americans show up, and sometimes it is lonely, and sometimes it is tough, and sometimes we only find a few of our really toughest, closest allies like the Aussies and the Brits standing side by side with us. Although we now have lots of people from those countries that we liberated, which Donald Rumsfeld refers to as the new Europe, people like the Polish troops, who are securing, taking part in the multinational organization, securing the southern part of Iraq.

Sometimes we have a difficult mission, but it is very clear to us since September 11 that if we do not change the world, the world is going to change us. For Americans who wonder why we have not been attacked over the last several years, why there has not been another September 11, one answer is that we have kept the bad guy off balance. We pursued them in caves, in mountains, at 12,000 feet high where they thought we would never get to them. We have gotten them in safe houses where they thought they were totally safe, and we have pursued them to places where they never dreamed we would be able to find them. Because of that, we have kept them off balance, and we have kept them in a position where it has been very difficult for them to organize another attack against the United States.

The idea that we can somehow pull back into the United States and not pursue this war against terrorism and everything will be fine is a very erroneous idea. The men and women of our Armed Forces who are undertaking this very difficult mission in Iraq are accomplishing the mission. The mission is of great value because we have discovered in this century that when we have brought freedom to countries, those countries have not been a threat to the United States.

We are not worried about the nuclear weapons in Great Britain's arsenal be-

cause Great Britain is a free nation. We are not worried about the nuclear weapons in the arsenals, for example, of France or Israel because they are free nations. But we are worried about nuclear weapons and the possibility of nuclear weapons being obtained by nations which sponsor terrorism and which are themselves tyrannical to their people.

Every time we establish a nation which is free, and it does not have to be a perfect democracy or a perfect republic, but a Nation that has a modicum of freedom for its own people, and which has a benign relationship, a good relationship with the United States, and which is not our enemy, and which will not be a launching point for future terrorist operations, then we have achieved something of value that will accrue to the benefit of future generations of Americans. That is what our troops are doing. Our troops are doing something which is worthwhile and which is good.

For my friends who read off very solemnly the names of dead Americans, please do not give the impression that their lives were given without value, without reason, without cause, because they were given as a result of a very important mission. They have given great value to our country, and we owe all of them a great debt of gratitude.

Madam Speaker, I have some other citations that I will read at a later time. I am just talking a little bit about these great men and women who serve our country in uniform, who I think agreed with the proposition that what we are doing in Iraq is the right thing.

What I would like to do right now, though, is yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), because she has a few things to say about this issue, and then we have five or six other colleagues that I would like to discuss this very important American mission with. I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California so much for yielding.

The gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) has done a wonderful job in leading in this war on terror and leading in securing this homeland and homeland security, which is right at the top of concerns of the American people. He is a true leader, and this House is fortunate to have him as chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. This country is fortunate to have his leadership on this issue.

Madam Speaker, over the last few weeks, I have noticed a change in the rhetoric, a troubling trend in the rhetoric. We have heard some of it here tonight, and it really saddens me when those that are opposed to an aggressive war on terror speak as they speak.

Increasingly we are seeing those that oppose the war downplay the importance of the war, or they are trying to minimize the seriousness of the sacrifice that our military is making. I find that very sad.

I do not know what the intent of those comments are. I dare not even venture to think what the intent of those comments might be that we are hearing from the far left in this country, and I certainly hope that they will reconsider those comments, but unfortunately, the message those on the left are sending is that we do not favor an aggressive war on terrorism and that we are not winning.

Madam Speaker, they could not be further from the truth, and I want to say thank you to all of these military families, especially the families whose family members the chairman is going to read those citations tonight, thank them for that sacrifice, thank these moms and dads who are here. They really are on the frontline in homeland security, these moms that are tending to children, the dads that are tending to children, while their spouse is deployed. Right here in this country, they are on the frontline. They are making a tremendous sacrifice, and we appreciate that.

My hope is that some of these families are watching tonight and will hear this, and I want to thank every man and woman who is in uniform, and I want them to know this. We are grateful and so thankful for their courage and their commitment. We believe that what we are doing in Afghanistan and Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and around the world, we believe in it. We believe in this mission, and we do not believe that the work in Iraq is in vain.

I would say this to them: Do not let anyone from the left or the right make you think otherwise. We believe in you. We know it is tough. We all know it is tough. Do we mourn each and every time we lose an American servicemember? Absolutely. It breaks our heart. Are there days when we think the sun will not shine on our mission? Absolutely. But Madam Speaker, we fight through those moments of doubt because we do not want our kids and our grandchildren to ever face another September 11. We do not want our kids to pay the price for inaction, and that is the price they would be called on to pay.

I could stand here and I could read through a list, all of my colleagues could join me in reading through a list, of achievements in Afghanistan and Iraq and not even begin to mention the other Middle Eastern countries, but I am not going to do that. It would take a long time. I could talk about how we are dismantling al Qaeda, piece by piece, every single day. I could talk about the fundamental change we are trying to bring to a region that has spawned terrorism for decades before we responded, but I know my colleagues are going to speak to that.

So I simply want to thank our troops and thank our families. I want to thank the men and women who are serving at Fort Campbell, the 101st Airborne, which is currently deploying. I want to welcome home from Iraq Tennessee's own 278th Regimental Combat

Team of the National Guard. They are returning to their families and loved ones this week, and we welcome them.

To the families whose loved ones will not be coming home, you are in our thoughts and our prayers. Your suffering is one we cannot fully comprehend, but your sacrifice is never going to be forgotten. We thank you, we appreciate you, and we pray God will bless you.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman, and I want to thank her for being such a great representative of those men and women who serve, particularly coming out of her National Guard unit and the 101st Airborne, a legendary division.

I might say to the gentlewoman that a lot was made of the movie *Band of Brothers*, a story of the 101st in World War II. Of course, we have referred to a lot of those people as the Greatest Generation, and indeed, they were a great generation. But in reading about the exploits and meeting with the individuals of the 101st Air Mobile Division, which today is, in fact, getting ready and going into the northern AO, a very difficult place, and having already served in Iraq, I think it can fairly be said they are the greatest generation. They are every bit as good and great and capable as the people that fought in the Battle of the Bulge and went up those cliffs at Normandy. We are very proud of them.

I thank the gentlewoman, and I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY), who has been a great supporter of the troops and worked with us to put together a great defense bill this year.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the opportunity to be here this evening.

When our troops go into battle, they are blessed to have a chairman who will fight for their body armor, who will fight for the resources they need to prevail in every fight in this war on terrorism, and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has done that, bar none. You have made it your mission. You have sons that are serving in Iraq. Thank you for the service that you give.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, do not go too far in praising me. My son did serve a couple of tours in Iraq, but just like lots and lots of other sons.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I think that is what is so important tonight, that all of us here, and I think most of us that are here to speak tonight, have been to Iraq. I have been twice, and I am struck, as I am sure you are struck, by the dedication of our soldiers. Let us face it, it is a difficult mission.

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The sacrifice that is involved, a number of Americans have lost their lives or have come home injured. There is a sacrifice for their families. There is no question about that. But when I have

gone there, the dedication, the sense of purpose and progress that our troops are making is noteworthy. It is something that I wish most Americans could see, because when we look at the television and see it on the nightly news, you do not get the full balance of the picture of the progress that is being made.

Yes, as I said before, it is a very difficult situation. There is a significant sacrifice that has to be made, but there is progress being made. The progress is our exit strategy. When our troops have successfully completed the mission, all of us, on a bipartisan basis, will be able to welcome them home to their loved ones and say job well done.

Let us look at that progress. I had the opportunity to go in November 2003 and in April 2005, and the difference was night and day. In 2003 there was hardly any Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces now total about 200,000 and are growing every day. Their training is improving. Their ability to operate independent of our forces is growing.

Yes, we have to continue to improve upon the command and control structure and to make sure that they have all of the training and armament that they need, but we are making tremendous progress; and we are seeing it in the field as they are able to operate on their own and take the battle to the terrorists who are killing innocent women and children and Iraqi civilians indiscriminately. And the Iraqi security forces, a year from now or perhaps in that time frame, they will be fully trained, armed and equipped; and that is certainly significant, significant progress.

When I was in Iraq in April, we had an opportunity to meet with a number of Iraqi women leaders, and they told me, and these are Iraqi people, they told me they are doing a much better job protecting their country and their citizens. Yes, there is still work that needs to be done, but hearing that from Iraqi people was very noteworthy.

The other thing that is so important and we saw an example once again of progress is the steady march in Iraq toward democracy. The Constitution has now been ratified. It was a very democratic debate. The Sunnis in particular, many of them were opposed to it; but they went to the ballot box; and for the vast majority, it was a peaceful day. People voted. The majority of the Iraqi people, I believe it was nearly 80 percent, voted for the Constitution.

What that means now, in December, there will be another round of voting for a permanent parliament that will have to go about the business of continuing the reconstruction. But as democracy takes hold, more than anything else that, in combination with the Iraqi security forces, will be what enables our troops to be able to know that they have done a good job, they will be more ancillary. They will first be able to withdraw to certain secure bases and then be able to come home

with a job well done. That is the strategy that is in place. It is working. The number of Iraqi security forces is increasing every day. Their performance is improving, and democracy is gaining traction every day.

With those two forces continuing, our troops will be able to come home. We will welcome them home to a job well done. Once again, it is an honor and pleasure to be here and to work with the gentleman on this important mission.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman; and I am reminded also, as I look down through the last several days in October, in fact starting with October 2, Iraqi Army soldiers captured bombers in Fallujah; October 5, Iraqi troops found and cleared improvised explosive devices in Fallujah; October 5, Iraqi soldiers seized a large weapons cache hidden by anti-Iraq forces in a school in Ramadi; October 8, Iraqi Army forces detained a suspected Iraqi bomber in Fallujah.

As we go down the line, we see the accomplishments of this force, which is a young new force, because we did not want to use the senior officers of Saddam Hussein's military. We needed to grow a force from scratch from this population. It has been tough. It has been rough. But these great Americans in the 2nd Marine Division, the 101st Airborne, the 3rd ID, which is going to be replaced shortly by the 4th ID in Baghdad, and all the rest of these tremendous troops who are serving, as we realized after New Orleans, are people with great talents, great ingenuity and great creativity. They can not only carry the day in a fire fight; they can also carry the day in training other personnel.

The accomplishments of the new Iraqi military as it stands up and takes over these areas of responsibility, like Najaf, which previously was a very hot area, that is a reflection on the capability of our troops, an important capability, which is the capability to train others. And of course why would others not want to be like American troops, because they show the greatest characteristics and character of any troops in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS), who has a daughter with a birthday today. Because of that, we have moved him to the front of the queue, but also because he has a great background in the military himself and really works hard for the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, as a fellow Ranger, I thank the chairman. It is a great honor to serve in this Chamber. I think the one thing that has been very humbling to me is the experiences I shared visiting many of my friends that I have known for 28 and 29 years, serving around the world, serving in Afghanistan, serving in Iraq; and I think that their story is never told in this Chamber.

Their story is very rarely told in the American media; and if it is told, it is

told almost as an afterthought. The one thing I would share that my classmates from West Point, friends from when I served as an enlisted soldier, friends who are in command of units on the ground now in the theater, returned to the United States with one common feeling towards the American media and toward the left, and that is anger at a complete misrepresentation of what they are doing.

I think the thing that we need to understand very clearly is that the battle to defeat the insurgents in Iraq is not taking place in Baghdad. It is not taking place in Tikrit and Fallujah and Mosul and Ramadi. That is where the kinetic end of the business is; but the insurgents are desperate. If Abu Mosab al-Zarqawi and Ayman al-Zawahiri in Iraq and Afghanistan can make the clear statement that they see the center of gravity of this fight right here in the United States and right here in American public opinion and in the willingness of American citizens to simply accept a call to duty, that is so clear when the American people have the facts.

As I travel in my district and as I have traveled in this country, the one thing I find very clearly is if an American citizen has taken a moment to speak to a soldier or Marine who has served on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan, they have a completely different opinion, a completely different opinion of what is happening.

I think the thing that is remarkable to me, and I remember when I first joined the Army, is that the members of the left mocked the military. I remember receiving the Hitler salutes and being called a baby killer if I showed up on a college campus in uniform. The thing that is remarkable to me and some of the deceit about the American left, and frankly some of the deceit I see in this Chamber when we talk about the greatest struggle that the United States has faced since the end of the Second World War, is now the American soldier, to their disgust, is being used as a human shield to attack their use in defense of this Nation and defense of our freedom.

To those on the left and my colleagues on the other side who go to great lengths to talk about how much they care about the American military, where were they when 18,000 American servicemen died between 1983 and 1986 during peace and war in the service to this country? I think your lack of an answer to that ever in the media speaks for itself.

When we talk about the success, I think it comes down to the fact that there is a political agenda that is driving this that has to do with taking America down at the expense of right. Moreover, I think that if we listen to what Abu Mosab al-Zarqawi and Ayman al-Zawahiri are really saying, they are more and more desperate, and ironically it feeds into the liberal media's desire to control the message in this country.

I recently met with an editorial board of a major newspaper. We got into this very discussion when I met with the soldiers of an airborne unit I deployed in the Middle East with, the 1st 508th Parachute Infantry, now in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The national media did not want to cover their successes. They were looking for disgruntled troops and could not understand why 100 percent of those soldiers wanted to reenlist. It is very simple: they believe in the mission they see on the ground.

I brought this up with this editorial board about the successes of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team in East Baghdad that have totally neutralized that area, which was once very violent, working closely and receiving great support from the Iraqi people. In fact, the Iraqi people are moving more and more into the front lines providing intelligence, providing the needed information. They are in the fight.

This editor of a major American daily newspaper looked me in the eye and said, "Geoff, car bombs are more sexy than opening schools." My heart broke when I heard that, because for the sake of a few dollars of profit, for a bit of readership, he chose to distort the very heart of what is happening in the world in the struggle that we face.

I would challenge those in this Chamber, as the left is selective, I would challenge those in this Chamber who want to talk about soldiers, and those watching on C-SPAN from around the United States, ignore the politicians. Talk to the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. I would challenge that in every community in the United States of America, invite a Marine, invite a soldier who has been on the ground, who has been in the theater and served working with the Iraqi people and trained the Iraqi security forces, and who understands who an IED is, and that it is not some convenient means to beat up on the administration or to engage in partisan political attacks, but has lifted a friend who has put his life on the line out of a wreckage.

I would tell you to invite those people to talk to your Rotary clubs and your chamber of commerce, talk to the editorial boards of the local paper, and bypass these people who are bent on one thing, which is deceit of the actual mission, or a complete cultural misunderstanding of what is happening, and share those successes as we hear over and over again from the troops on the ground in every unit that comes back. There are is lack of recruits for the Iraqi security forces, and our units in combat are reenlisting at rates of 100 percent, and it means one thing: they believe in the mission. They see the success. They understand the seriousness of this fight; and ultimately they care about us in this Nation enough to serve.

I thank all of you men and women who are serving on active duty right now who have accepted the call to duty. My prayer is that this Nation

will rise up, that citizens all across this country will rise up on the east and west coasts and in the heartland and will accept the call to duty that we have as a Nation and this generation to protect the foundation of our freedom, to finish this job and to have the forces of tyranny and suppression of truth know once and for all that they cannot prevail.

That is why they will not fight us in the street. They seek to win in American public opinion in the media or in criminal attacks against innocent civilians.

With that, I thank the troops for serving. I thank my colleagues for having the courage to stand in this body and point the truth out, to cut through the political rhetoric. I challenge those in the media to cover the truth of what is happening and to bring our soldiers and our Marines' stories into the forefront so the American people get a true perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for allowing me to speak tonight.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his statement and for his service and for all of the wonderful people that he represents.

I add my thanks to folks that wear the uniform. They are our very best citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Fort Benning, Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), who has done such a wonderful job on the Armed Services Committee and then moved on, but still has us in his heart. I thank the gentleman for all of the help that he gives.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me thank the chairman for allowing me to be a part of this special hour and be with my colleagues. I am humbled from just listening to the remarks of the gentleman from Kentucky who just spoke and others.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I just wanted to thank the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) as he goes out the door because I know he has his beautiful daughter, Hannah, with him tonight. It was good of Hannah to come over and to watch Dad and delay her birthday celebration for a little bit.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I had the great opportunity to visit Iraq on two occasions: in December of 2003, five days after the capture of Saddam Hussein, and then again in February of this year with my colleagues on the Committee on Rules. I want to say what I noticed in Iraq, in the theater of operation, was I met soldiers' soldiers and I met commanders' commanders; and I want to say, too, that the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of our Committee on Armed Services, is a chairman's chairman. It was said earlier by other speakers the sacrifice he made himself while serving in Vietnam, and his sons now serving in Iraq.

This is the kind of support that we need to show and let those young sol-

diers who are over there right now, maybe some of them are having a needed break, an opportunity to get out of harm's way and possibly watching the deliberations that are occurring right here this evening as we praise them and give them our support.

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In the previous 5-minute litany that we heard from the other side, I think it was just the opposite. It was a little sad to hear them read names and then condemn the Commander in Chief, to condemn the cause.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to throw out a couple of names of young soldiers that gave their life in Iraq. I could mention Specialist Justin Johnson from Armuchee, Georgia, just 2 years out of high school. His dad, Joe Johnson, actually is in the Reserves now serving, activated, asked to be activated, and yet he gave his son in the ultimate sacrifice.

First Lieutenant Tyler Brown, president of the student body at my alma mater, Georgia Tech, had an opportunity to be in Arlington in the Honor Guard. But, no; instead he chose, he asked, to go to serve in Iraq, and, 2 weeks after he arrived there, was killed by a sniper. President of the student body at Georgia Tech just 4 years ago. I think of his family. I think of his mom and his dad and his brother and his sister.

I think of Command Sergeant Major Eric Cooke, who at age 43, after 19 years of service and four combat tours of duty, 1 day after I met him that first time in December of 2003 that I went to Iraq, on Christmas Eve, he gave his life by sitting in that seat in a Humvee so that one of his soldiers could get some needed rest.

That is the kind of men and women that I want to honor and remember here tonight as we talk about these great patriots that are serving us so well.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is all about one thing that we can remember. Those of us who are not veterans, those of us who are veterans, no matter what war we are talking about, and this country has been through a few in the 235 years of our history, the soldiers, particularly those who have given their lives in combat, they do not want us to forget. They do not want us to forget. That is all they ask of us.

And I am often reminded of that poem that was written by a Canadian physician serving with the Allies in World War I in Flanders, Belgium, when his buddy gave his life in combat. He wrote a poem, a tribute to him, and that is the great poem that we all know called "In Flanders Fields." I will try to recite it, Mr. Speaker. I might not do a very good job, but it goes something like this:

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
We loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
For if ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

That little poem that Dr. McCrae wrote in World War I, of course, is a very famous poem today, and it just says one thing, Mr. Speaker. It says, do not forget us. We died for our country. No matter what the cause, even if you do not agree with it, as we hear from the other side tonight and other times on this floor, we have got to remember the sacrifice, otherwise these 2,000 soldiers who have given their lives, and four times that many who have been injured, will indeed have died in vain. We will have forgotten them. We will not have taken up that torch that they are passing to us and they are asking us to hold it high.

That is our obligation. We do not necessarily have to be veterans, combat veterans, like the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) or the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) or the many men and women, too. And I think of the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) and others who have served in this country. We are all serving. And I do not question the patriotism of the people on the other side until I hear them talking about the Commander in Chief and saying that he lied to the American people and that we did not need to be there, that we struck first. How quickly, Mr. Speaker, how quickly they forget 9/11.

God bless our troops. God bless the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER). We are behind them 100 percent, and we are winning, and we will continue to win and bring these soldiers home safe with a victory in hand.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for a very eloquent statement. And I would just protest to my colleague that I did absolutely nothing special in Vietnam, and these guys and women who are serving in Iraq are real heroes and have performed extraordinarily.

And I thought that was a very fitting recitation of Flanders Fields because the last line that the gentleman recited where the soldier says, take up our quarrel with the foe and do not fail us, was forgotten several times in this last century because we came out of World War I, the war that was supposed to end all wars, was so horrible we could not envision having a successor to World War I, and we let our guard down.

And when we got into World War II, we found that we had neglected our Armed Forces, and it took an incredible build-up and lots of casualties before we had the industrial might of the United States and all of our population working and about half of them under uniform and pushing back on the Axis powers. And then we demobilized so

quickly after World War II that when somebody asked General George Marshall how the demobilization was going, he said, It is not a demobilization; it is a route. We are throwing our weapons away.

And because of that we had a third-rate nation, Korea, push us down that peninsula in 1950 and almost pushed us into the ocean before we rallied and came back up to what is now the DMZ.

And we went through other fluctuations where we forgot that the admonition in that poem from people who gave their lives was to be strong and to fight for freedom and not to give up what we had. And we now realize that in this war against terror, we have to be strong, and we have to be forward-leaning because if we let the terrorists have safe haven like they had in Afghanistan where they could assemble their operations, where they could do their training, where they could gather their allies and have a platform to operate from, then we now know they could strike into America with that assemblage of capabilities. And that is what we are trying to deny them.

And if we can have an Iraq that has a modicum of freedom, and we are not threatened by free nations, and has a good relationship with the United States, and will not be a springboard for future terrorist operations, that is going to be good for generations of Americans especially in this neighborhood.

So it is an important thing that we are fighting for. It is a value. And the troops who have achieved this for us and are pushing forward with this mission are of value, and I think that is the essence of what the gentleman just said very eloquently, and I really appreciate his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), who has been a stalwart on the committee and really cares about the soldiers.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding to me.

It is an honor to serve with him on the Committee on Armed Services. Of all the committees in the House, if our country is at war, there is not a better place to serve if one is too old to do anything else. But this is a great committee to serve on. He leads this committee well, and it is a great honor for me to learn this business, working with him on that committee.

I went to Iraq in July, and I want to talk a little bit about that. I grew up in west Texas. It is an arid desert. As we drove around some of the places in Baghdad and Kuwait, the territory, the scenery was remarkably similar to west Texas. I grew up where summers were hot, and the weather was bad, and the heat and blowing dirt, dust storms sometimes so bad that the street lights would come on at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. So I am a reasonably informed consumer about hot, bad weather.

I got off the C-130 in Baghdad on that July day and stepped out into the meanest, nastiest weather I could have

ever imagined. It was so much worse than anything I had ever experienced in west Texas. And we have got the finest group of young men and women, and some not so young, leading this country's fight in Iraq against the terrorists, doing an incredible job.

I found a group of men and women whose morale was incredibly high. They knew they were doing the right thing. They knew they were well equipped. They knew they were well led. They knew they were doing a job that has to be done to protect this country. And they are accomplishing great things.

The other side, it is almost as if they have got their fingers in their ears and their hands over their eyes because they do not see this march to progress that we are doing. The elections last week that we got the official word yesterday 78 percent of the country voted for this Constitution, an Iraqi Constitution, not an American Constitution but an Iraqi Constitution. The march, the votes we have had, the votes we will have in December. We are making progress.

The stories that are not told is the electricity that is flowing, the commerce that is going on, the health care system that is reemerging, the stock market that is reemerging. All these good things that happen in this country get ignored, and it is partly our fault because we are not doing a very good job. Ever since I have gotten back from Iraq, every speech I have made, every talk I have given, I have included a piece of why it is important that we stay the course. And I hate to use that phrase. Let me rephrase that: that we finish this job, that we do not break faith, as our colleague just mentioned, with the young men and women who have led this fight.

Liberty is not cheap. It comes at an incredibly high price. It is easy to be a hawk, but we hawks ought to know the cost. Every one of my colleagues has been with me and others to Walter Reed and to Bethesda to go out there and hug the necks of those young men and women whose lives are forever changed, in some instances in a blink of an eyelash, to hug their necks, to thank them.

I have had three casualties since I have been elected. The first was a young man that was killed in November of last year, Brian Baker; another young man killed this summer, Mario Castillo; a young man who was killed from Odessa. I go see those families. There is nothing one can say. One cannot make the pain any easier, but I go hug their necks and tell them thank you, thank you on behalf of the country for their sacrifice.

I was sitting that evening with young widow Amy Baker, pregnant with twins who would not see their dad. It is a high price we are paying, but liberty is not cheap. Through that crushing grief that only a young widow can feel, she looked at me with tears streaming down our her face and she said, You

make sure you tell President Bush to finish this fight. Do not let Brian have died in vain. Do not, in effect, break faith with Brian, because he knew he was doing the right job. He knew he was there getting something done.

The gentleman mentioned earlier the "greatest generation," and it was. My dad is in that generation. He fought World War II. He fought in Korea. And they accomplished great things. But the men and women who have done this fight in Afghanistan and Iraq can lay claim to having freed over 50 million people. We can argue about weapons of mass destruction and why we got where we are and all that kind of stuff, and there is a place for that. Let us do that. But at its core, they have freed 50 million people. Twenty-five million people in Afghanistan have gone to vote, created a democracy there. It is not perfect, but they are free today. They were under the Taliban, one of the most horrible regimes we can imagine, where the women were chattel. If I did not like something my wife did, I would just cut her head off, slit her throat, and let her die on the side of the road. They are no longer in charge over there; Karzai is. And a democracy is emerging there.

Twenty-seven million people are free in Iraq today, out from under the jackboot of Saddam Hussein, arguably the most ruthless, cold-blooded killer of any generation. He is in jail on trial for his life, as he should be.

So let us do not lose sight of the fact that we have accomplished great things, and we will stay in Iraq and get this job finished.

Let me close with a story in Afghanistan. We went from Iraq to Afghanistan, and we went out to a forward operating base, flew out of Kabul on a Chinook helicopter for about an hour, across a landscape where the way of life had not changed in 1,000 years: nomadic herders, tents, mud huts, sheep, those kinds of things. We landed in this forward-operating base, and this lieutenant colonel in charge there told us this story about they were on patrol one day, mounted in Humvees, and they were going down this dirt path because there are no paved roads in this part of the world. A young 10-year-old boy comes running out of a village that they were approaching, waving his arms and screaming and hollering, trying to get their attention. They stopped and waited for him to get there. And he breathlessly told them that the bad guys had come the night before and put a bomb in their path just ahead of that Humvee.

□ 2100

So our guys dismounted, got out there. Sure enough, there was a bomb, bad enough that it would have killed everybody in that lead Humvee. They disarmed it. And as they were getting ready to proceed, the lieutenant colonel asked that young man, why did you risk your life to come tell us this, because obviously you are a marked individual now for having helped the other

side. The 10-year-old little boy, in that innocence of youth, simply looked at him and said, well, when the Americans came, I got to start going to school.

So the anecdotes are full of these types of stories all over the place, what wonderful things our country has done on behalf of these people in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has come at a high price, but liberty always comes at a high price; to get it originally and to keep it comes at a very, very high price.

I want to thank each one of those moms and dads and husbands and wives and children tonight who grieve over the loss of a loved one, who grieve over the injury of a loved one. I thank you. It sounds awful trite and there is not much more we can do, but each one of us who expresses it does it from the absolute core of our being, to tell these families thank you so very much for your sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for letting me participate tonight. I appreciate that. God bless each and every one of our men and women in uniform tonight, wherever they are serving, whatever their responsibilities are, and particularly bless their families as they make sacrifices that most of us do not have to make, that we are not called upon to make.

So we simply want to make sure that every single day somebody somewhere thanks them and their loved ones for their service to this country. God bless each one of them, and God bless this great United States of America.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman, and I just want to echo his comments.

I am looking at what our young men and women are doing. The gentleman mentioned the Greatest Generation, and they did great stuff in Normandy and Bastone and Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima. And we had wonderful people, wonderful troops in Vietnam.

The gentleman said I was a combat soldier. Compared to these guys, I was not a combat soldier. I had an easy tour in Vietnam. And compared to what these people went through, these young people who drove that iron spear up into Baghdad, who were told when they were going, and Tommy Franks testified before us on the Committee on Armed Services, General Franks testified that they heard on the radio back and forth between Saddam Hussein's commanders, "Get ready to use the special weapon," and they thought that was nerve gas, those young people were moving ahead into what they thought was a nerve gas battlefield, and they moved ahead.

And this maelstrom of IEDs, these remotely detonated devices, which are very deadly, very tough, all of the conditions that they have gone through and fought through, the massive dust storms, the ambushes and that intense heat that the gentleman from west Texas interestingly mentioned, that makes them, in my estimation, as good

as the Greatest Generation, and from my point of view, the Greatest Generation are those folks that are over there right now.

I appreciate the gentleman for his support for these people. We will keep on working. I know we will finish this mission, and we acknowledge the value of those men and women who have carried it to date.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, let me say one more thing, if I might, and the gentleman said it already. A free Iraq, an Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors is no longer a sanctuary for the bad guys, will make the Middle East a safer place to be; and by extension, this country will also be a much safer place, as will the world.

So I agree with the gentleman's assessment, and we will finish the job.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would like to yield the balance of my time to the gentleman who has organized and led this Special Order, the great gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE), a great member of the Committee on Armed Services. She has waited until last, and she is our cleanup hitter. I yield to the gentlewoman, and I thank her for her great work and her trips to the warfighting theaters.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman for organizing this tonight, and I would also like to thank the gentleman for giving me the privilege of leading a Committee on Armed Services trip to Iraq at the very end of September-early October. It was my very first trip.

We flew into Kuwait City and landed there on the airstrip to take a C-130 into Baghdad. There on that airstrip, I had my very first conversation with one of our soldiers. As I spoke with him, he looked at me and he said, Ma'am, I know what I am doing, I know why I am doing it, and if I have anything to do with it, there will never be another attack on our Nation. He said, So don't worry about me, just pray for me. And he picked up his gear and he walked away.

As we got on that plane, I had another conversation with one of our military members who was assigned to that C-130. He told me his enlistment was almost up, but when he got home he was going to join the Reserve unit in his home area. And he said to me, You know, I won't be coming back here anytime soon, because in that Reserve unit, everyone volunteers to come to Iraq, and I won't have a turn to come back for some time.

It hit me right there before we ever left Kuwait City that, first of all, these are volunteers who voluntarily join our military, and many of them volunteer to go to Iraq or to return to Iraq.

That evening, we had dinner with our troops in Baghdad. A young woman from Virginia looked me right in the eye, and the first thing she said was, Why aren't our elected leaders telling America what we are doing? I told her

that I already had determined that, that we had done a very poor job of telling the American people what they are doing over there, why they are doing it, the threat to America if they do not succeed, and the great success stories that they are having there. And I promised her that we would tell their story here in America.

These people know why they are there. They know what they are doing. But their question, these American heroes who are serving for us, their question is, what are the American people thinking and what are they saying?

That gave me the opportunity to tell them the stories from back home. To tell them about a cab driver in Phoenix, Arizona, that I met this summer who told me he is from Iraq, he has been here 16 years, he has family there, and he goes back on contract to help train the Iraqi troops. When he realized I was a Member of Congress, he stopped the cab, turned around and said, Will you please thank the American people for me for what you have done for Iraq? He said, You people work harder than anyone I have ever seen. He said, I don't think you even sleep, and you are doing it all for us.

I told them about a presentation at Sea World this summer before Shamu came on that was the commercial from the Super Bowl, where our troops walk into an airport in their camouflage and everyone stood and clapped. And I told them how the audience when that presentation was done, they were standing, they were clapping, they were cheering and they were crying. Of course, I said to my daughter, And you thought you were in the minority.

What I will tell them next time is what happened in Shannon, Ireland, on our way back, and a group of Marines walked through the airport in their camouflage and everyone stood and everyone clapped for those Marines in Ireland.

But I also told them that I believe that their generation will also be named. We have talked a lot tonight about World War II, and they are being named the Greatest Generation. I truly believe history will name them; and I have decided until history does, that I am going to call them the Freedom Believers.

We saw the success of what they are doing there. We met with units that work with IEDs and the EOD unit, that they are able to find and disarm and blow up a lot of these bombs. We met with the 42nd MP Brigade.

We toured that base in Baghdad, and then we flew to Balad Air Base. In that 60-mile trip, flying very fast and very low in an Army helicopter, what we saw were green agricultural fields. And those fields, the people that were working them were waving at us in the helicopter. When I commented on that when I reached Balad to General Frank Gorenc, he told me that happens all the time. We toured the hospital there, and we saw that we not only treat Iraqi civilians who have been injured; we treat

the insurgents or the terrorists themselves that are doing this damage there.

These young men and women and those commanders know the success that is taking place in Iraq. They know that Saddam Hussein did not maintain their infrastructure there, that there was much deferred maintenance, that there was also deliberate destruction that was caused by sabotage and looters.

But USAID is hard at work in Iraq. They have a publication that they have done which talks about the improvements they are making to the infrastructure, the 2,500 schools country-wide that have been rehabbed, over 32,000 teachers and administrators that have been taught, \$20.7 million in grants to create partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi universities, 200 USAID missionary personnel there at work, and over 80,000 Iraqis at work in sectors throughout the country.

These young men and women also understand the threat to the Nation. This shows our having dinner in Baghdad. This is in Qatar as we were leaving with the military men and women we met there.

But these young men and women and the commanders understand the threat to the world. We all know that Osama bin Laden made an edict in 1998, and he said, "Anyone who believes in Allah is to find Americans and to kill them."

What this map shows in green is their immediate goal. We have all heard and read Osama bin Laden's words and their mission to take over the entire world. None of us can believe that. This is their current goal. In the very bottom corner is their goal in 100 years, and when you see that in color and you see that their entire goal is not a little country in the Middle East, their goal is the entire world, it makes you understand that they are at war with civilization.

We as Americans, some of us think that Iraq is a local conflict. Iraq is the centerpiece of that puzzle, of that very much bigger plan of the people who would go after you and I if they had the opportunity.

It is difficult for us as Americans to understand that and to understand the threat. They have no tanks and they have no planes. They use our things. They use our planes. They use our subways. Their target is not the military; their target is us. It is only the military right now in Iraq.

Our military men and women know that there is no option but to fight this war and to win, not only for Iraq, but for us as well. And they know about the spread of freedom. They are the Freedom Believers. They know the spread of democracy in the Middle East makes this a safer world for all of us. What they want is for the American people to understand that, and I thank them for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for arranging this tonight.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). The Chair must remind Members that remarks in debate should be addressed to the Chair and not to others in the second person, including persons who might be guests of the House.

TRIBUTE TO ROSA PARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for letting me claim the time for my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), who I trust will join us tonight.

Mr. Speaker, several of my colleagues have gathered to honor an individual who was one of the legendary Americans of the last century. She was named by Time magazine as one of the 100 most significant people of that century. She was honored by President Clinton as a winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and she has been honored by numerous organizations all over this world and all over this country. Her name was Rosa Parks. She was, of course, an icon of the South, an icon of the country, and she was called home to her maker just last week.

She will have two memorial services. One we understand will be in Detroit, Michigan next Wednesday, one in Montgomery, Alabama, this coming Sunday. Two communities, Montgomery and Detroit, will do their best to make a statement on behalf of this extraordinary woman; and I thank the House for giving us this hour to speak to her role tonight.

I wanted to begin by hearkening, if I can, back to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1954. Montgomery, Alabama, happens to be the city where I was born in 1967, it happens to be the city where my mother was born, and my grandmother came to that city in 1931.

I still remember them telling me what it was like to sit at the back of the bus. As those who know history remember, that was not simply a Montgomery phenomenon; it was a Southern phenomenon. The practice of making black Americans sit in a certain place in the bus, the practice of making them yield their seat was carried on in a number of Southern cities; but I remember hearing the stories about Montgomery.

□ 2115

My mother and my grandmother never liked the stigma of segregation. They were not happy about it. But, like so many people their age and generation, they just took it as being part of the overlay over the land. They just took it as being part of the atmosphere of living in the South. And, like so many other people, they went on about

their business, hoping for a better world, but not knowing when or if it would come.

And then all of a sudden this extraordinary woman named Rosa Parks, who was in her mid-40s at that time, decided that she would rise up and say "no" to this system of segregation. One day in late 1954, she resisted the order, she resisted the command to get up and to yield her seat. The world has never turned back from that moment. All of a sudden, people like my mother and grandmother were freed. But the interesting thing is that white Americans and white Montgomarians were freed as well, because all of a sudden, from that day forward, or maybe, more accurately, from the day that the moment succeeded and won concessions from the white power structure in Montgomery, we reached a point where people were free to sit together. That might seem like a quaint thing to those of us in 2005, but the sitting together led to talking together, led to reasoning together, and led to people accommodating each other. It led to people one day getting to the point that they could understand and build one solid and one stable community. That was the legacy of Rosa Parks.

As a number of my colleagues will point out tonight, we would do well if we understood exactly why segregation thrived for so long and what it was meant to do. It was never just meant to be a symbol. It was never just meant to be a code of laws; it was meant to be a stigma. It was meant to say to a certain group of people, you are not like the rest of us. You are not like us. You are different. You are worse than we are. It was meant to confer a badge of inferiority. And I think that the hope of segregationists, the hope of the supremacists was that these people who were being stigmatized might slowly but surely lose their confidence and slowly but surely buy into all the myths and all the hatred about them. That is why segregation thrived for so long.

Well, when Rosa Parks stood up by sitting down, when Rosa Parks refused to move, it was a triumph of the human spirit. It was a triumph of all people who yearn for some measure of freedom and dignity in their lives.

I hearken back to the last conversation, Mr. Speaker, the Special Order that happened before this. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle talked about the adventure in Iraq right now and talked about the dawning of freedom in that territory. I am reminded how recent is that experience in this country. As we go around the world speaking on behalf of freedom, I am reminded tonight of how fresh and how recent is that experience here.

I think we ought to speak to another woman: Vivian Malone Jones. Vivian Malone Jones was another trailblazer like Rosa Parks. At the age of 20, she was the first African American to attend the University of Alabama and to stay there, and, at the age of 23, she